

and two of them leading the way on charter schools, Arizona and the State of Michigan. And that is helping to improve all of education within those States. But they are experimenting with charter schools.

Then my colleague and I were in Florida together for a hearing. We were in Tampa. The State of Florida has taken it one step further where they are now actually creating charter school districts so that a whole school district can apply for a charter which says, our relationship now with the State is very, very different. We are not going to focus on bureaucracy and paperwork and process for a greater degree of freedom. What we are only going to focus on is learning.

And then Illinois has reached a unique arrangement with the Chicago public school system, which is one of the largest school systems in the country; and for all intents and purposes, they have created a large charter school relationship with the City of Chicago for their public schools. And again, what they said is, let us forget about all these categorical programs, because the only thing that we really want to focus on, so the State of Illinois rather than now funneling a whole bunch of separate checks to the City of Chicago, now really sends them two, sends them one for general operating and one for special education. And then what they say, on a yearly basis, we are going to come back and we want to review with you the actual results of kids' learning.

So those are the kind of reforms and the reinvention that is taking place at the State level. We have tried to do the same thing here in Washington by creating charter States where States can have a different relationship with the Federal Government that says we are going to do this as a pilot program, hopefully with 10 States, by giving them freedom to move dollars around from program to program; and Washington is no longer going to be going through these 219 steps for grants and audits and those types of things. What they are going to do is they are going to say, as a Federal Government, we are going to reinforce what you are trying to do at the State level, which is to focus on learning with children. That is where we need to go.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting thing. What we are really talking about is treating States like States rather than subjects of a centralized Federal Government.

Power was always meant, even by our Founders, to flow from the bottom up, not from the top down, in America. But with respect to the Department of Education, it was about the 1970s when President Carter occupied the White House that we saw the Department of Education begin to take that authority from States.

So here we are today on the House floor talking about the liberty and freedom that States deserve and rightfully possess to build schools that

reach out to children and talking about that almost in revolutionary terms. We have to wage a small war here in Washington simply to allow States to be treated like States.

And my colleague is right, we have seen all across the country great approaches. Governor Jeb Bush in Florida and Lieutenant Governor Frank Brogan in Florida have really led the way at providing real liberty and real freedom to local communities. And they do that based on results.

Those States that hold children in the greatest peril, school districts that are failing in Florida, are the first places they have started in Florida to begin to provide educational opportunity to parents. So you have parental choice in those districts.

I remember the woman we heard from, the mother from the inner city, I cannot remember what city she was from, but we heard her testimony in Tampa, and she came and said, you know, my school was failing. It was rated poorly by the State and failed a couple tests in a row. And the response from our State was to let me, the parent, decide where to send my child to school.

Now, she could have chosen to send her child to the same failing school, but she, like most parents, wanted something better. And so, she drove her child to a different neighborhood not too far from where she lived and found a school where her child was thriving. And she was almost to tears I remember in front of the committee with joy thanking the State of Florida, Governor Bush, Lieutenant Governor Brogan for passing this program in Florida that allowed this parent to be treated like a real customer for the first time and a program that allowed her child to be the center of attention, the center of emphasis in education, not the government school building, not the government employees who are part of a failed system, but to put children first.

That is a model that I think we are pushing for throughout the country and would like to encourage, but it needs to be driven by States.

I will provide one more example as to why we should not look to Washington to reform.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, before my colleague goes there, yeah, the testimony that we had in Florida from that mother was awesome and a sharp contrast to the testimony that we received a couple of years earlier in New York City, where I believe a father came in and testified and said, 5 years ago I knew that the New York City schools were some of the worst schools in the country. But they had a 5-year plan to improve; and I had no choice, I had to send my child to the school that they told me she should go to. He said, it is now 5 years later and the schools are no better and, if anything, they may be worse, and they have got a new 5-year plan. I have no choice. But what if this 5-year plan does not work any

better than the last one? Then I have had my child in a failing school for 10 years, and I am going to lose my child.

And as excited and as close to tears as the woman was in Tampa because of the positive things that were happening, we saw the same thing in New York City on the other side, a father almost coming to tears saying, I have no choice. I know the schools are not any good, but have I got no choice and that is where my son or daughter is going to have to be. And what hope does my child have if they are going to be in a school that cannot teach them and that is where they spend the 10 or 11 years that are key and formative in enabling them to get the basics?

So it is about people. It is not about bureaucracies. It is about parents wanting to have the best opportunities for their kids, whether it is in the Bronx, whether it is in Cleveland, or whether it is in Tampa or whether it is in Colorado or Michigan.

Mr. SCHAFFER. And parents do want the basics for their children. I think most parents understand and if given a choice would choose the kind of schools that build for their children the kind of intellectual foundation that allows them to learn more and at exponential rates as they grow older and begin to grow in an academic setting.

I have got a question for my colleague, and that is the three R's. In Michigan I assume the 3 R's means about the same thing as it does in Colorado. What do the three R's mean to people in Michigan?

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Mr. SCHAFFER. My parents, oddly enough, were educated in Michigan and grew up there. My father became a school teacher and that is what took him to Cincinnati, Ohio, where I was born. He taught all of his life until he just retired a few years ago.

When I grew up and went to school in Ohio, the three R's meant reading, writing, and arithmetic. That is what my father taught in the classroom, as well. And when I moved out to Colorado, that is the kind of education I was looking for for my children were schools with reading, writing, and arithmetic, the basic, most fundamental foundational of learning.

I mention all that and I kind of refer to the three R's that way because today, September 7, the Secretary of Education made a speech, it was his annual back-to-school address entitled "Times of Transition," he made the speech today before the National Press Club. I was going through this before I came over to find out what the Secretary of Education, and this is the person, for those who are unfamiliar, is the person who is the head of the U.S. Department of Education, this is the guy who is in charge.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Who for 8 years has been in charge now. I think he is the longest serving member of the President's cabinet and has been there since